

HONG KONG BAPTIST UNIVERSITY

Written Submission to the Legislative Council Panel on Education

Hong Kong Baptist University appreciates the Government's continuous support to the self-financing post-secondary education sector. This sector with its large student enrollments (in both sub-degree and undergraduate degree programmes) plays an increasingly pivotal role in not just providing the necessary human resources to meet the changing needs of Hong Kong but in furthering Hong Kong's development as a regional education hub.

2. Statistics from the HKBU's self-financing post-secondary education shows that more than 80% of the Associate Degree graduates continue their studies each year locally or overseas while the remaining 20% join the workforce. Territory-wide statistics also confirm the encouraging prospects for sub-degree graduates from the self-financing programmes as they continue their studies in the self-financing/publicly-funded top-up degree programmes.

3. Since it is the Government's goal to support the parallel development of the publicly-funded and self-financing sectors, the existing gap between the support to these two sectors must be bridged, particularly in the following two areas:

- (i) Formulation of clear guidelines and regulatory framework for self-financing institutions offering 2-year and 4-year programmes in terms of both "hardware" and "software" requirements; and
- (ii) Direct funding support is needed for both the self-financing operators as well as to the students.

Formulation of QA guidelines and regulatory framework

4. The lack of a common regulatory framework in monitoring operators of 2- and 4-year programmes and the lack of a comprehensive, long-term commitment to the development of the sector have raised concern and uncertainties about the quality of some of the programmes and providers. This, at the same time, has an adverse effect on the public confidence in the sector.

5. To ensure a continuous sustainable development of this sector, clear regulatory framework in terms of both the "hardware" and "software" components of a provider are needed as a way to monitor key metrics.

6. As far as the hardware component of a self-financing tertiary education provider is concerned, the facility requirements should include the average minimum physical space per student and staff to determine the maximum student capacity allowed. The following facilities should also be considered as key metrics:

- Teaching/learning (e.g. number of classrooms, lecture theaters and learning commons);
- Library (e.g. area, volume of printed and digital book titles and electronic resources);

- Computing and other labs (e.g. number of computers, science laboratory, psychology laboratory, communication studio);
- Sports facilities (e.g. gymnasium, swimming pool, fitness room); and
- Student development centre (e.g. counseling and career guidance services).

It is important that these essential hardware components be in place before a programme is approved for student enrollment.

7. On the software side, formulation of clear regulatory framework is also important in monitoring the quality of programmes, and the suggested metrics are:

- Number of full-time teaching staff and administrative staff;
- Maximum ratio of full-time to part-time staff;
- Ratio of students to full-time teaching staff;
- Teaching/research workload;
- Numbers of full-time guidance counsellors with professional qualifications;
- Staff development resources; and
- Programme duration in terms of hours of instruction/self-study requirement.

8. With clearer guidelines and regulatory framework on these key metrics, the quality of the self-financing programmes could be better monitored and its sustainable development could be better warranted.

Direct funding support to both the providers and the students

9. Given the self-financing nature of the programme providers where tuition fees are expected to be higher, the financial burden on students and their families could not be under-estimated. Relief measures should be made available to the students (and their families) in times of need. It is not equitable for students from the publicly-funded sector and the self-financing sector to be treated so differently in terms of resource support.

10. Given the fact that the Government has since 2014 been subsidizing 1,000 places per cohort to the 4-year self-financing degree programmes, consideration should be given to extend this subsidy to the self-financing sub-degree and top-up degree programmes. The encouraging statistics of the articulation/employment statistics of the sub-degree and top-up degree programmes have proven to warrant Government's support in terms of rendering financial assistance to the needy students enrolled on these programmes. One of the feasible options to be explored is the adoption of the "Student Voucher Scheme" for the self-financing sector.

11. With a more balanced, sustainable direct support from the Government, the self-financing post-secondary education sector will continue to thrive and play an important role in strengthening Hong Kong's leading position as the regional education hub.

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